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ABSTRACT

The benefits and the role of speech communication courses in developmental education programs are examined in this paper. The first section outlines the need for a package of developmental classes that includes a course in speech communication to prepare students for college-level courses. It describes a successful developmental program for academically disadvantaged students at Jefferson Community College, which includes a speech communication course; cites studies showing the need for training in communication skills and reports results of a survey of instructors of freshman level courses that emphasizes the need for students to learn speech communication skills. The second section of the paper suggests 11 criteria for developmental programs, related to such areas as institutional priorities, educational objectives and philosophy, teacher characteristics, and accountability. The final section provides suggestions for designing a developmental speech course. Appendixes describe the Jefferson Community College courses that deal with speech communication skills and present tables of data about the program, its students, and the student retention rate. (GT)

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# THE ROLE OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION IN DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS

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This paper is about the role of speech communication in developmental programs. I use examples from my own experience with disadvantaged students, both as a teacher and as the director of a Special Services Program. My goal is to present persuasive reasons, with adequate documentation, for the integration of the teaching of speech communication skills in developmental education programs.

Three general areas are discussed:

I. The need for a package of developmental classes which includes courses in speech communication areas.

II. Criteria for developmental programs.

III. Designing a developmental course in speech communication.

I. The need for a package of developmental classes which includes courses in speech communication areas.

I am a faculty member of Jefferson Community College, the first open door institution of higher education in Louisville, Kentucky. It is the only one of the state's community colleges located in the inner city of a large urban area.

The majority of our students come from those groups usually called disadvantaged: low income, minority, and underprepared. A 1978 survey of our student body showed that 40% received some sort of financial aid, 44% earn less than $7500 per year, 2% are not high school graduates, and 20% have G.E.D. certificates.[1]

In 1977 J.C.C. received a grant from the Office of Education for a Special Services Program. This is a program designed for students already enrolled in college who are disadvantaged yet show academic potential.

Students eligible to participate in SSP are identified during orientation testing. They have the following academic characteristics:

1. Reading is below the 17th percentile of all college students as measured by the Nelson-Denny Comprehension Reading Test, Form C.
2. English composition skills are below the 20th percentile of all the two-year college students based on the McGraw-Hill Writing Test and a writing sample evaluated by a member of the English faculty.
3. A self-assessment of the student's math background indicates a need for developmental math.

In our first semester we enrolled 103 students in the program who were poorer, received more financial aid, and had more serious

academic deficiencies than did the "average" student at our institution. Yet at the end of the first year we were able to demonstrate that the Special Services Program students had a significantly higher retention rate than did other JCC students and that they outperformed an academically matched control group. The following is a summary of our first year's progress.

| | Special Services Program N=103 | Control Group N=174 |
|---|---|---|
| Completed at least 6 semester hours | 60% | 33% |
| Returned after one semester | 79% | 50% |
| Completed at least 12 semester hours in 2 semesters | 37% | 29% |
| Completed at least 20 semester hours in 2 semesters | 26% (GPA: 2.61) | 10% (GPA: 2.41) |
| Returned for a third semester | 37% | 19% |

One reason our program is successful is that we provide a package of developmental courses for our students. When a student does not have the reading skills necessary for success in freshmen level courses, it does not make sense to enroll that student in developmental courses in reading and English, plus college-level biology, math, and history, for instance. S/he needs a package of courses to get ready for these college-level classes; offering developmental courses piecemeal is like putting a bandaid on a broken leg. Yet in 1978 it was found that most community colleges do just this.[2] "While the student is working to develop appropriate communications skills to the point that he can succeed in other courses, he is enrolled in three college level courses where

verbal proficiency is an absolute requirement for success."[3]

The Special Services Program at J.C.C. provides these classes for eligible students:

Developmental English composition

Developmental reading

Developmental math (either arithmetic or elementary algebra, depending upon the student's skill and background)

Developmental speech communication

Freshman orientation

Cognitive skills laboratory

We make special provisions for students who work more than 15-20 hours per week or who have heavy family responsibilities. These students are allowed to enroll in 6-9 semester hours rather than the regular 13 semester hours provided for full time students. Part-time students enroll in English composition, reading, and speech communication.

I believe we are among a small minority of schools that offer a developmental speech communication course in our "package." Yet there is an overwhelming need for the inclusion of communication skills in developmental programs.

Barbara Leib-Brilhart has written, "Some facts are difficult to face for people who feel that literacy should somehow be a notion tied only to print.

"Fact 1. Speech is approximately 500,000 years old, while print is only 500 years old. New technology has given us better, faster, and cheaper ways to engage in spoken communication with many people at one time in many parts of the globe, an activity which human beings seem to enjoy.

"Fact 2. Writing is best taught in relation to the process of speaking, something most people do anyway (with or without formally learned rules).

"Fact 3. To be literate in reading and writing is indeed beneficial, but those processes isolated from speaking and listening will not facilitate survival in the twentieth century."[4]

Barbara Strain states, "Focusing on the communicative needs of the student motivates him for four reasons:

1. It addresses his personal needs.
2. It appeals to his desires to share himself and ideas.
3. It provides him opportunities for new relationships.
4. It eventually provides satisfaction from needs met through effective communication."[5]

In a 1975 study by Norvell Northcutt et al, Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (affective, cognitive, psychomotor) were translated into four general skill areas:

1. Communication skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
2. Math skills
3. Problem-solving skills
4. Interpersonal skills

The study concluded that more than half of the United States population were unable to perform these skills in any meaningful manner. [6]

In studies at our school we find that the ability of most students to communicate in a positive and meaningful way with a wide variety of others is severely limited. They communicate poorly in writing because they often do not have the organizational skills to put their ideas together clearly. They communicate poorly in conversation with those unfamiliar or unlike themselves. They frequently have no idea that communication skills are learned behavior and they usually know how to communicate well only with those most like themselves.

The results of a survey[7] conducted by the Developmental Curriculum committee at our institution furthur emphasize the need for the inclusion of the course in speech communication. This survey included input from all those teaching freshman level course. In part, here is what we discovered:

1. In cognitive areas, competency in classification, causation, logical deduction, reorganization of information, perceiving relationships, and extraction of main ideas are essential. This includes both written and/or oral expression.
2. Affective skills rated high included adhering to instructors' goals and the student having sufficiently high self concept to work both independently and cooperatively with other students.
3. There was overwhelming agreement on the importance of attendance, preparedness for class, and appropriate classroom behavior.
4. Oral presentation and/or group discussion skills need to be fully developed in these freshman level courses: physics, social work, psychology, political science, history, English composition, English literature, philosophy, foreing languages, art studio courses, music, introduction to business, economics, culinary arts. In addition, these skills are considered important, but not necessarily a part of the final grade, in these courses: math, chemistry, education, commercial art, and accounting.

A survey of your institution's requirements would probably yield similar results.

II. Criteria for developmental programs

I include this area for two reasons. One, because it is important for program success. John Roueche has written about these criteria in a number of places.[8] The research demonstrates clearly that if these criteria are ignored, the program will suffer.

The second reason is that speech communication people have special training in seeing that these criteria are met. As you review each one I am sure you will remember your training in such areas as organizational communication, persuasion, group process, interpersonal communication, and public speaking.

1. Institutional priority, with all the support "top priority" implies. As in any business, support must come from the top if change is to be implemented. The program must be part of the school's top priorities, with the best faculty members a part of it. This may have been difficult a few years ago, but with falling enrollment affecting everyone in higher education today, any program that can keep students in school is sure to catch the administration's attention.
2. An overriding goal to help the student persist in school is crucial. All successful programs apparently have student success, defined by staying in school, as a goal.[9]
3. A philosophy that ". . .places value on the worth of the individual as well as on the importance of promoting his social/economic well-being."[10]
4. A developmental studies program that is integrated into the main stream of the institution's progress, functions, and goals.

5. A division or department of developmental studies with clear exit criteria. One means of discovering this is to find out what the entrance criteria are for all freshman level courses. As someone involved in speech communication you will also want to find out specifically what all speech faculty expect students to be able to do before entering and after completing each speech course.
6. Enthusiastic, well-trained teachers and counselors who consistently demonstrate a positive attitude and who want to be in the program.
7. Curriculum which is useful from the student's point of view.
8. Strong focus on affective areas such as increasing self concept, motiviation, responsible behavior, and the like.
9. Accomodations for part-time students.
10. Accountability built into the program. (see Special Services Program Report, attached) Success must be verified through accurate collection of pertinent data. It provides you with identifiable, measurable means of indicating the success or failure of the components of the program. Educators today are mandated to provide this data. We cannot expect funding from our institutions or from the government if we are not willing to conduct validated tests and collect relevant data.
11. Strong, positive interpersonal communication skills must be emphasized for faculty, staff, and students. The success or failure of an otherwise well-run program of any kind frequently hinges on the kind of communication that goes on. This is an area in which we in speech communication have considerable expertise.

III. Designing a developmental speech course

If your institution does not have a developmental speech communication course, why not design one?[11] All schools have different rules for new course and program proposals, but any new course design should include certain basic areas.

1. Identify and describe the high risk students at your institution as specifically as possible.
2. Define the basic skills considered necessary for persisting in your institution and identify which ones will be fulfilled by your course.
3. Describe how your course will address the critical needs of the high risk students at your institution.
4. Describe how the course can be implemented.
   a. What is the cost for teacher training, additional instructors, equipment, etc?
   b. What is the course content? Exactly what will be taught?
   c. Include a thorough syllabus: name of the text; general objectives; a class-by-class calendar; behavioral objectives; expected competencies; exercises; assignments; criterion referenced tests; evaluation procedures, including content, instructor, and student self-evaluation; and a bibliography.
   d. Seek acceptance, in writing, from other institutions in your area. Will the course transfer? Do your colleagues have any interest in it? What do administrators and division

chairpersons think of your proposals?

Creating a new course is not an easy task. But one of the most rewarding parts of doing this work is the pleasure you will derive from communicating with your colleagues and getting a course on the books that will benefit the students. Also remember, the wheel need not be reinvented. Others have done this and their experiences contain valuable information for you. I know of only one text written expressly for developmental communication courses: Communication Skills by Barbara Strain and Patricia Wysong (Addison-Wesley, December, 1978) is an excellent book with a first-rate teacher's guide. At Jefferson Community College we have used their original worktext, published by Econ-o-Print, for two years. Review the reading list at the end of this paper for additional sources of information.

The abstract for this program reads, "As our students continue to reach for new career goals, their needs for developmental education will reach into new areas. The community college must find ways to integrate communication skills into such education." No college curriculum has grown as rapidly over the past six years as that of developmental education.[12] "It is the effort of 'responding positively' that makes a sound developmental studies program reflect good sense on the part of faculty and administrators."[13]

The need and the rationale are clear for the inclusion of developmental speech communication courses. The rest is up to you.

## Notes

[1] Brian Daly. Analysis of Major Printout. (Louisville, Kentucky: Jefferson Community College), 1978.

[2] John Roueche. "Let's Get Serious About the High Risk Student." Community and Junior College Journal (September 1978), p. 28.

[3] Ibid, p. 30.

[4] Barbara Lieb-Brilhart. "What If Johnny Could Read and Write? . . . Another Look at the Literacy Issue." Communication Education (September, 1977), p. 253.

[5] Barbara Strain. "Teaching the Community College Student." ACAT Bulletin (Summer, 1976), p. 6.

[6] Norvell Northcutt, et al. Adult Functional Competency: A Summary. (Austin: The University of Texas: Division of Extension), 1975.

[7] Developmental Curriculum Committee. Questionnaire Results (Jefferson Community College) May, 1978.

[8] "Let's Get Serious About the High Risk Student," pp. 30-31.

Developmental Education, pp. 14-52.

Overcoming Learning Problems (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers), 1977.

[9] Developmental Education, p. 9.

[10] Ibid, p. 10.

[11] For a report on creating a new course, see Maria Miller, A Developmental Speech Communication Course (Presented at the Annual Conference of Speech Communication Association, Washington, D.C.), 1977.

[12] Developmental Education, p. 66.

[13] Ibid

## Suggested Reading


Community and Junior College Journal. Washington, D.C.: American Association Junior Colleges.

Cross, K. Patricia. Accent on Learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1976.

Grant, Mary Kathryn and Daniel R. Hoeber. Basic Skills Programs: Are They Working? Washington D.C.: American Association for Higher Education Research. Report No. 1, 1978.

Journal of Developmental and Remedial Education. Boone, N.C. : Appalachian State University.

Moore, William Jr. Community College Response to the High Risk Student: A Critical Reappraisal. Washington: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1976.

Morrison, J.C. and R. Ferrante. Compensatory Education in Two Year Colleges. University Park: Pensylvania State University, 1973.

Roueche, John E. Confronting Student Attitudes. Manchaca, Texas: Sterling Swift Publishing Company, 1976.

_____ "Let's Get Serious About the High Risk Student." Community and Junior College Journal, September, 1978, pp. 28-31.

_____ and R. Wade Kirk. Catching Up: Remedial Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1973.

_____ and Suanne Roueche. Developmental Education: A Primer for Program Development and Evaluation. Atlanta, Georgia: Southern Regional Education Board, 1977.

_____ and J.J. Snow. Overcoming Learning Problems. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1977.

_____ Barbara Washburn and Oscar Mink. Assessing Student Opinions of the Learning Process. Manchaca, Texas: Sterling Swift Publishing Company, 1976.

Young, Barbara. Successful Grant Implementation, Or What To Do Once You Get It. A paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Speech Communication Association. Minneapolis, November, 1978.

Appendix I: Developmental courses at Jefferson Community College that deal with speech communication skills.

We are committed to the inclusion of developmental speech communication courses in the Special Services Program and to the notion of reinforcing communication skills in other classes. Three of our courses that deal with these skills are:

1. Developmental speech communication. This is a practical course in oral communication. The purpose is to help the student improve his or her interpersonal and organizational communication skills. General objectives include: understanding the process of communication; identifying behavior in self and others that encourages and inhibits effective communication; practicing assertive behavior; understanding the principles of interpersonal communication; and communicating clearly to a given audience.

2. Freshman Orientation: This is a one hour per week class, taught by our counselor for all SSP students. They meet in classes of 15-20 to learn coping skills, communication skills, appropriate classroom behavior, vocabulary and spelling skills, personal responsibility, and the like. The counselor has borrowed heavily from speech communication courses taught at J.C.C. and consults regularly with the speech faculty about adapting materials from the discipline to this course.

3. Cognitive Remediation. We are particularly proud of this course in which students are given a Cognitive Diagnostic Test, especially designed for the Program, that indicates skill levels in Verbally

Defined Language, Visual Abstract Language, Pattern Recognition, Classification and Elementary Reasoning, and Logical Interaction. These cognitive skills have been demonstrated to be necessary for the success in a variety of college level courses, particularly those in which tests are criterion referenced and in which thinking is regarded as an explicit learning objective.

The skills described in this course relate not only to how one thinks, but also to the way one communicates. A biology professor created the learning lab with a grant from the Fund for Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE). While the lab was originally designed to be scientific in nature, it has grown to have a strong communications' thrust.

A five-hour long videotaped workshop, Cognitive Remediation, is available free of charge. The tapes will be sent one week prior to the scheduled workshop and should be returned on week following the workshop. To arrange for a workshop date contact Ellen Korn, Jefferson Community College, 109 East Broadway, Louisville, Kentucky 40202, Telephone (502) 584-0181.

Appendix II.

Special Services Program
Jefferson Community College
ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
(July 1, 1977-June 30, 1978)

Grant #: G047721057
CRS Entity #: 1-616001218-A1
Project #: 482AH 80106
Program CFDA #: 7580293

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

| New Student Enrollment: | Special Services Program: | Comparison Group: SSP eligible but did not participate | Jefferson Community College Downtown Campus[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fall, 1977 | 103 | 174 | 3917 |
| Spring, 1978 | 24 | 162 | 3554 |
| Total | 127 | 336 | 7553 |
| **Racial Composition of new students:** | | | |
| Fall, 1977 | | | |
| White | 32% (34) | 30% (53) | 58% (2268) |
| Black | 68% (69) | 65% (114) | 31% (1218) |
| Other or Unknown | | 5% (7) | 9% (368) |
| Spring, 1978 | | | |
| White | | 22% (35) | 54% (1917) |
| Black | | 72% (116) | 43% (1528) |
| Other or Unknown | | 6% (11) | 3% (109) |
| Total | | | |
| White | 35% (44) | 27% (88) | 56% (4185) |
| Black | 65% (83) | 68% (230) | 38% (2809) |
| Other or Unknown | | 5% (18) | 6% (477) |
| **Sex (new students):** | | | |
| Male | 26% (44) | | 42% (1527) |
| Female | 74% (83) | | 58% (2109) |
| **Ages:** | | | |
| 16-19 | 24% (31) | 30% (101) | Average age:27 |
| 20-27 | 54% (68) | 46% (156) | 39% between 26-74 |
| 28-39 | 19% (24) | 15% (49) | |
| 40+ | | 5% (18) | |
| Unknown | 3% (4) | 4% (12) | |
| **Reported Income Levels:** | | | |
| 0-5999 | 82% (104) | | 42% |
| 6-7499 | 9% (11) | | 9% |
| 7500-8999 | 4% (5) | | 8% |
| 9+ | 5% (7) | | 41% |
| **Financial Aid:** | | | |
| Basic Grant | 64% (81) | | 33% (1628) |
| Other | 21% (27) | | 22% (1275) |

(These 108 awards were distributed among 92 students.)

Indication of financial need: 95% (121)
Physically handicapped: 8% (10)

All figures for Jefferson Community College were obtained from the Analysis of Major Printout, Fall, 1977, and Spring 1978.

SSP/JCC 1977-78

IMPORTANT FINDINGS

| | Special Services Program | | | SSP eligible but did not participate | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | Number | G.P.A. | % | Number | G.P.A. |
| Entered JCC Fall, 1977 | | 103 | | | 174 | |
| Passed 6 or more semester hours in 1st semester | 60% | 62 | N/A (all classes graded "pass" or "fail") | 33% | 58 | 2.02 |
| Passed 12 or more semester hours in one semester | 37% | 39 | N/A | 14% | 24 | 2.40 |
| Did not return after one semester | 21% | 22<br>10 stopouts<br>6 withdrew<br>4 transferred to other colleges<br>2 unable to locate<br>(5 of the above plan to return to SSP, Fall, 1978) | N/A | 50% | 87 | .52 |
| Returned for a second semester | 79% | 82 | | 50% | 87 | |
| Completed 2 semesters (at least 12 hours) | 37% | 40 | 2.40 | 29% | 51 | 2.18 |
| Completed 2 semesters (at least 20 hours) | 26% | 27 | 2.61 | 10% | 18 | 2.41 |
| Completed 2 semesters (at least 24 hours) | 13% | 13 | 3.01 | 5% | 9 | 2.65 |
| Attended a second semester but withdrew from or failed all classes | 35% | 37<br>14 unable to locate<br>8 poor attendance, poor study habits<br>6 poor health<br>5 got jobs<br>3 personal reasons<br>1 entered Armed Forces | N/A | 20% | 36 | N/A |

| | Special Services Program | | | SSP eligible but did not participate | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Entered JCC Spring, 1978 | | 24 | | | 162 | |
| Passed 6 or more semester hours | 46% | 11<br>2 exited SSP<br>14 retained SSP<br>8 failed or withdrew from all classes<br>6 unable to locate<br>1 will transfer to another college<br>1 retained, SSP | 3.06 | 39% | 63 | 1.90 |
| Passed 12 or more hours in Spring semester | 21% | 5 | 3.40 | 10% | 17 | 2.38 |
| Total number who passed 6 or more credit hours in one semester | 57% | 73 | | 36% | 121 | 1.95 |

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The following 10 questions were answered by 38 students on a scale of 1-5 (1=strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree.)

3.68 1. The orientation meeting gave me a good overview of the college and SSP.

4.15 2. I now feel like I am a part of JCC.

3.68 3. I have a good understanding of the kinds of education programs and the services which are available, including financial, counseling, health services, and student activities.

3.84 4. I have realistic view of myself and my needs, and my educational goals as a resulty of the SSP.

3.60 5. The academic instruction in SSP is very good.

3.86 6. I enjoyed my classes.

3.84 7. The instructors are interested in students.

2.78 8. The counselor is friendly and interested in students.

3.97 9. The SSP tutoring services have helped me.

4.18 10. I attended at least 5 tutoring sessions.

The following were indicated as being most helpful:

English classes

Teachers

Communication classes

Easy registration

Reading classes

The following was liked least:

Developmental classes not counting for transfer credit

(25% of the respondants indicated there was nothing they disliked about the program.)

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SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF PRE AND POST TESTS

SSP/Sec 1977-7

| McGraw-Hill Basic Skills Reading Test-Form B | Raw Score | Percentile | Estimated Grade Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| First semester students in first semester developmental reading classes | | | |
| Overall pre test Mean Score (N=105) | 10.77 | 9th | 8.5-9.0 |
| Pre test mean score of those who took both pre and post test (N=63) | 10.56 | 9th | 8.0-8.5 |
| Post test mean score | 14.18 | 26th | 11.0 |
| Second semester students in their second semester developmental reading course | | | |
| Overall pre test mean score (N=35) | 12.51 | 15th | 9.0 |
| Pre test mean score of those who took both pre and post test | 12.25 | 14th | 9.0 |
| Post test mean score | 13.44 | 19th | 10.0 |
| Students who by-passed the 2nd semester developmental reading course and took college reading | | | |
| Overall pre test mean score (N=40) | 17.05 | 46th | 12.0 |
| Pre test mean score of those who took both pre and post test | 17.9 | 51st | 12.0 |
| Post test mean score | 17.59 | 50th | 12.0 |

KATES Diagonistic Essay Grading Sheet: A system which provides a means of grading an essay by looking at the four basic elements of composition: content, organization, mechanics, and sentence structure.

Scoring: 1-3 = Below average
4-6 = Average
7-9 = Above Average

| | |
|---|---|
| English 101/Lab | |
| Overall pre test mean score (N=66) | 3.65 |
| Pretest mean score of those who took both pre and post tests (N=43) | 3.89 |
| Post test mean score | 4.55 |
| DRE 005 | |
| Overall pre test mean score (N=8) | 2.0 |
| Pre test mean score of those who took both pre and post tests (N=5) | 1.95 |
| Post test mean score | 3.30 |

Appendix III: Retention figures

| | Special Services Program | Academically matched control group | Stratified random sample, all JCC students [1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Entered Fall, 1977, semester | N=103 | N=174 | N=135 |
| Returned Spring, 1978, semester | 79% | 50% | 51.1% |
| Returned Fall, 1978, semester | 37% | 19% | 30.4% |
| Returned for three consecutive semesters | 27% | 13.7% | 23% |

[1]Data provided by Institutional Research, November 2, 1978.